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ABSTRACT

Several notable high school journalism advisers and instructors were surveyed to find out how they were able to stay updated on changes in press law and print technology, while also teaching classes in news writing and production techniques and overseeing production of each issue of their school publication. Most respondents said that they read typesetting and printing trade publications, and spoke frequently with printers and publishers to keep informed of printing and publication trends. Many also attended national journalism conventions, seminars, and workshops to share ideas. They all subscribed to the Student Press Law Center "Report" to stay aware of censorship laws and cases. Most of the respondents helped their advanced students polish skills by assigning an oral and written critique of each issue of their publication, by providing copies of pertinent articles from scholastic and professional print media, by providing opportunities for students to engage in public relations activities for the school, and by providing opportunities for them to attend summer workshops. (HTH)

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Keeping Pace With the Changing Times: Updating Both Advisers' and Students' Skills in the Journalism Laboratory

by

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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"I would propose that we (journalism educators) work toward a sense of "professionalism" and realize that we have little support beyond each other (since most of our administrators simply tolerate us and really don't understand completely what we are trying to do with schools, teachers, advisers, and student editors.)"[1]

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Rationale

After listening to Professor William F. Paschal's address on "Continuing Education for the Journalism Teacher/Adviser" at last year's Secondary Division meeting in Boston, Mary Benedict, in-coming president of the Division, suggested that I prepare a paper addressed not only to advisers' problems, but one encompassing the special continuing education needs of advanced journalism students, also.

And what a veritable enigma it is! How does the harried journalism adviser, with 18 issues or more of a publication to produce yearly, in addition to teaching the rudiments of newspaper ethics, news writing, layout, etcetera, to fledgling students, manage to keep pace with the explosive technological changes taking place within the profession? Changes in press law? Advertising revenue decline because of a stagnant economy? Furthermore, how does he/she encapsulate the precious moments of time to update advanced students' skills? Staff members, as well as the adviser,

must be in step with progressing technology, graphic innovations, and other constantly changing paraphernalia of the trade.

Methodology

Realizing the immensity and almost insolubility of the problem, I decided to pose these same questions to a number of highly respected high school adviser/teachers throughout the country, whose records for producing top-quality publications are virtually unmatched. If anyone has found even partial solutions to these perplexing dilemmas, surely these fellow travelers along the journalistic route could provide some insight that would be helpful to other advisers.

Among others who borrowed time from their hectic end-of-the-year schedules to respond to my queries were Ben Van Zante, adviser to the West Side Story, Iowa City, Iowa; Robert Button, adviser to The Tower, Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan; Dr. Regis Boyle, Newspaper Fund Journalism Teacher of the Year, 1980, and former adviser to The Black and White Bathesda, Maryland; Marjorie Robinson, Newspaper Fund Distinguished adviser, 1980, and adviser to the Pacemaker publication, The Redbird, Loudenville, Ohio; Freeman Hover, adviser to the Rincon Echo, Rincon, Arizona; Marian Hutchison, adviser to the Stohioan, Stow, Ohio; and John Bowen, Newspaper Fund Distinguished adviser, 1977, and adviser to

The Lakewood Times, Lakewood, Ohio.

Outstanding Adviser/Teachers Offer Stratagems

While many of their suggestions overlap, indicating that these top advisers have discovered common solutions to their problems, others offer unique "survival" methods that could be incorporated successfully into other secondary education journalism curriculums to break the "so little time, so much to do" syndrome.

For example, Ben Van Zante[2] whose West Side Story is an acknowledged leader in design and graphics, updates his printing/typesetting skills by reading regularly the U and lc magazine (free) from the International Typeface Corporation, New York, and the American Printer and Lithographer magazine (free) from the Maclean-Hunter Publishing Corp., Chicago. In addition, since his students are already using video-tape terminals for producing their publications, he attends AM International or Compugraphic sessions "to look at their new equipment."

In addition, Van Zante recommends reading design/layout books, house organ magazines, and exchange papers for innovative ideas.

To keep abreast of changes in press law, Van Zante reads the Student Press Law Center Report and participates in workshops in Texas, Oklahoma, Iowa, and New York. He also

currently is producing a law package for the IHSPA Newsletter.

He adds, however, "I do live in fear that our district (now under 'tight money') will shut down my travel and lecturing, closing many doors that give me much information."

Concerning his techniques for upgrading his advanced journalism students' skills, Van Zante's methods might well be implemented by other advisers who are striving for excellence in their publications. One of his most innovative ideas is a complete "Survival Kit," produced each spring by in-coming staff members, containing all the information the students must know about their individual staff responsibility, headline counts, typesetting information, and other details. In other words, nothing is left to chance in Van Zante's organization: Anything and everything a staff member could possibly want to know about publishing the West Side Story is neatly spelled out for him.

In addition, Van Zante conducts a basic review in the fall for staff members, with a complete study of the Quill and Scroll Stylebook, revised to fit the West Side Story's needs. As part of their grade, students also are asked to give both an oral and written critique for each page, department, and issue. As Van Zante notes, "Lots of teaching and writing is covered here, and we always refer back to

or up-date the 'Survival Kit'."

Like Van Zante, Robert Button[3] finds that reading professional publications when the time allows is perhaps the most helpful resource in updating his skills. He recommends particularly the national school press association publications and also finds the School Press Law Center Report informative. For him, design and layout ideas come mainly from exchange papers, the professional media, and talking with printers.

Primarily, however, Button considers teaching summer workshops his best source for ideas. "For a week or more at a time," he writes, "I am living journalism with others of the most outstanding teachers in the country. Unlike the situation at school where no one else knows or cares anything about journalism, workshops provide tremendous stimulation through the shared expertise." He is also expecting "good things" at this summer's workshop in "Freedom and the Mass Media," at Valley Forge, Pa.

Admitting that merely keeping up with the daily deadline of producing a weekly paper is sometimes more than his staff can handle, Button said that his advanced journalism instruction is seldom conducted as a large group activity except in orientation at the beginning of the year. "More often," he said, "the instruction comes with individuals or small groups when we sit down to talk about specific

concerns such as story development, editing, a layout problem, an ethical concern, etc. The instruction grows out of individual needs."

Newspaper Fund Journalism Teacher of the Year, 1980, Dr. Regis Boyle,[4] now a visiting professor at the University of Maryland, also subscribes to the Student Press Law Center Report to update her skills, in addition to reading AEJ publications, Editor and Publisher, the national scholastic press magazines, and the professional media for graphic innovations. She also attends and speaks at both high school and professional press conventions, including the National Press Club's functions. Visiting and using the equipment at area newspaper printing plants also updates her knowledge of the latest electronic developments in the trade.

To sharpen her advanced students' skills, Dr. Boyle utilizes a number of interesting techniques, including having them read college-level journalism books, "particularly in special areas such as features, in-depths, et al," correcting Journalism I papers, answering mail from schools seeking help, and participating in writing contests.

Dr. Boyle also assigns her advanced students work on the following individual assignments:

> Sending out press releases for school events -- a publicity bureau.

Serving on the PTA monthly bulletin, since parents welcome students with newspapering skills.

Working as stringers on community newspapers -- sports, for example.

Developing specialist reporters who cover -- Board of Education, County Council, State Legislature, faculty meetings, and other special areas for the entire year.

Establishing positions such as community editor, in-depth editor, feature/arts editor -- these students can be responsible for planning supplements and the long-range planning for them.

Advising newspapers in local elementary schools -- or assisting in their production.

Speaking assignments for a few top-notchers at press conventions.

Soliciting advertisements.

Taking the responsibility for daily newscasts over the PA system.

Finally, Dr. Boyle encourages her students to read exchange papers, noting unusual stories and graphic effects.

Freeman B. Hover,[5] long-time adviser to the Rincon Echo in Arizona and currently an officer in the Columbia Scholastic Press Advisers' Association, bemoans the fact that "the days of three or four j-classes and two free periods per day are long gone," because of economic austerity programs in his district.

Despite the financial problems, his students will also be producing their publications on a new Comp/Set VDT this fall, and to keep pace with the latest printing methods,

he talks with printers, typesetters, and publishers of various magazines to learn the trends. In addition, he observes what the professionals are doing currently with their formats and designs.

Hover also attends state and national journalism conventions, "seeking those sessions that will give me information to update my students," he notes.

An avid reader of all the national scholastic journalism publications, Hover also takes classes from time-to-time to keep himself current, specifying that last year he enrolled in two classes at Northern Arizona University in press law, and expects to serve as a "critiquer" and resource person for the annual Arizona Interscholastic Press Association Publications Workshop this summer, as well as the La Jolla (UC/ San Diego) Workshop.

He admits that updating his advanced classes is "one of the toughest problems, because we become so involved in the mere production of the newsmagazine that there seems little time for updating."

According to Hover, the best technique that he has found for this purpose is to distribute xeroxed copies of articles from scholastic magazines, pertaining directly to specific editors. "I use the textbooks less and less over the years," he writes, " and rely on the magazine hand-

outs as well as the daily and exchange papers and my own professional knowledge to keep my classes current."

Any listing of top Ohio high school journalism teachers would have to include Mrs. Marjorie Robinson,[6] retiring this year from her position at Loudenville High School, where she advised the top-notch Redbird for over 25 years.

To keep abreast of journalistic trends, Mrs. Robinson attends regional, state and national press meetings, teaches at the Ohio University journalism workshop each summer, and reads and observes the professional media for graphic ideas. She also works out an end-of-the-year exchange with top scholastic publications throughout the country.

Like Hover, she also clips and copies any article from the national press association publications that will be relevant to her and her staff. She also "keeps in touch with high school journalism teachers, college journalism professors, and my own graduates who are working on papers from New York to Alaska."

For her advanced newspaper laboratory, Mrs. Robinson requires students (for grading purposes) to outline the text; submit a notebook collection of newspaper clippings as story sources; write a major story for each of the 12 issues of the Redbird; submit a stringbook including all work published in each issue of the Redbird or area papers;

and critique each issue of the paper.

Her advanced students also conduct interviews with visiting newspaper personalities, including Jody Powell and Jack Anderson this year.

Another outstanding Ohio journalism teacher, Marion Hutchison, adviser to the award-winning Stohioan, also updates her skills by reading current national scholastic journalism magazines and reports that she has found helpful articles in Quill and Scroll and C:Jet magazines recently. She recommends William Harwood's Writing and Editing High School News (Clark Publishing Co., 1977) for background information on column and radio script writing, particularly.

Conducting probably the most intensive up-dating of advanced students' skills, Mrs. Hutchison requires all her second and third year students to complete regular assignments each week, along with their publication duties. She writes, "I give them mimeographed assignment lists for a six-week period so that they know when various lessons are due. We study writing in-depth stories and authoritative interviews; copyreading; laying out, cropping, and scaling pictures for a double-truck; constructing Gallup-type polls; and employing modern advertising techniques, using current psychological methods."

She also assigns other projects when necessary, in-

cluding reviewing page makeup, and headlines, feature, editorial, or other types of writing. her instructional materials are handouts that she has gathered from many sources throughout the years, similar, no doubt, to Mrs. Robinson's and Hover's xeroxed copies of updated articles.

Mrs. Hutchison also requires her advanced students to write crime and accident stories, some from fact, and others from police reports, "to sharpen their newswriting skills and to create an awareness of the care needed in writing such stories."

Although Lakewood Times' adviser, John Bowen,[8] has no specific format for polishing his advanced journalism students' skills, his own methods for keeping pace with changing trends are similar to the other outstanding teacher/advisers queried.

In addition to reading and preparing articles for the national scholastic press magazines, Bowen also subscribes to Columbia Journalism Review, particularly for trends in press law. An acknowledged expert in school press censorship problems, he was speaking on this subject at a Tri-County Journalism meeting at Youngstown State University where I interviewed him. Past president of the Journalism Association of Ohio Schools, sponsored by Ohio State University, and also of the Northeastern Ohio Press Association at Bowling Green State University, Bowen has lectured

extensively on student press freedoms on the regional, state, and national level.

Bowen also updates his skills by teaching at summer workshops, including Ball State, Ohio University, and Kent State University, in addition to judging for the national press association evaluations.

Since he, like Button, is responsible for a weekly paper, little or no time is left for additional assignments, but he feels that his students are "learning by doing."

Purposely leaving my own methods to the end, as a twelve-year adviser to the Bugle, and currently a vice-president of the Columbia Scholastic Press Advisers' Association, I can personally attest to the frenetic pace of the journalism teacher/adviser's schedule and the physical limitations of time that prevent me from accomplishing everything that I would like to do, both in updating my own skills and my advanced students.

I concur with the necessity of constant reading of all the scholastic press magazines to keep pace with the changing trends. As Thomas Eveslage notes in his paper, "A Research Agenda for Journalism in the Secondary Schools," presented last year at the Secondary Education Division meeting in Boston: "These journals (scholastic journalism publications) provide the most effective conduit available for communicating with those intimately involved with

scholastic journalism. The publications reveal timely and practical concerns, suggest what research is needed to help resolve those immediate problems, and provide an important vehicle for conveying research results to affected persons."[9]

I also read the Sunday New York Times and the daily Wall Street Journal, the former for advanced graphic techniques, the latter for in-depth, saturation reporting ideas which I incorporate into classroom teaching sessions. I also scan the AEJ publications, the Columbia Journalism Review, the new publication, The Press, among others for ideas. I often tell both my journalism and media classes that hardly a day goes by without my clipping an article or graphic detail from the professional media for classroom presentation.

Free-lance writing, particularly for the School Press Review, is also an excellent method for honing my techniques and focusing on a particular subject for comprehensive review.

I also judge for all three of the national scholastic press associations, and agree with Professor Paschal when he comments, "Once an adviser has reached a certain level of experience, judging is an excellent means of learning from others and instructing in another way through writing critiques."[10]

I can hardly underestimate the value, either, of

both attending and speaking at regional, state, and national journalism seminars, including the annual AEJ meetings, when I often learn more from the question-and-answer sessions than the information that I am presenting. One of the most worthwhile sessions I have attended recently was the Journalism of Ohio Schools' advisers' spring retreat at beautiful Atwood Lake Lodge in Ohio, where Dr. Mario Garcia of Syracuse University met on a one-to-one basis with us to up-date graphic and design principles.

Like many other schools, Boardman is also moving into the electronic age of newspaper production, and my staff and I will spend a considerable portion of the summer in training sessions at our printing plant, learning to use the Compugraphic equipment the School Board has purchased for us this year.

As for up-dating my advanced students skills, I can only lament, like so many other advisers, that publishing a camera-ready, bi-weekly paper, often 16 to 20 pages, leaves little time for specific review assignments. My second and third year journalism students have produced a Bugle stylebook, however, and also man an extremely busy school news bureau, preparing articles for the local professional media. In the past, students have also prepared a four-page Career Education newsletter, distributed to other schools

throughout the state.

We also critique each issue of the Bugle, study interesting innovations in to exchange papers, and, in general, try to keep up with the changes in the professional media. In addition, I am seriously considering giving my advanced students the weekly current events test that I prepare for my J-I classes, and having them develop a "Survival Kit" similar to Van Zante's, to tighten our over-all organization.

Conclusions

Basically, I have found that journalism teaching/advising is a constant exercise in continuing education. At no time can the J-teacher, regardless of experience, lull himself into a false euphoria, thinking that he is finally an "expert," and knows all he can possibly know about the subject. He will soon find himself as extinct and anachronistic as the "dodo" bird, with a similarly obsolete publication.

To summarize my conclusions, I have found that the majority of the outstanding adviser/teachers I queried share these specific similarities:

1) Each is an experienced adviser, with at least 10, and in one specific case, over 25 years in scholastic journalism.

2) Despite their years of experience, each

reads regularly the national scholastic press association magazines and the professional media as time allows to keep current with changing trends.

3) Each attends and the majority speak at regional, state, and national press seminars to update their skills and share their expertise with other advisers.

4) To update their knowledge of constantly changing technology, most are in close contact with their printers, visiting the plant, and familiarizing themselves with electronic processes.

5) Most are long-time judges for state and national student press evaluations.

6) Each subscribes to the Student Press Law Center Report, considering the publication a "must" for updating their knowledge of legal trends in scholastic journalism.

7) Several write articles in their area of expertise for the scholastic press and advisers' publications.

8) Most are currently teaching, or have taught, in summer university student workshops.

9) Each feels the stringent limitations of time in adequately preparing both themselves and their students to cope with the never-ceasing challenge of scholastic journalism.

Although only one adviser I queried incorporates specific additional assignments for her advanced students into her classroom routine, the majority of the others utilize these methods:

1) Require both an oral and written critique of each issue of the publication.

2) Meet with staff members frequently on a group or an individual basis, to discuss a specific

problem or suggest a new technique to improve their publication.

3) Study top exchange papers assiduously, to observe graphic innovations and for news and feature ideas.

4) Share with students any articles taken from recent issues of the national scholastic publications or the professional media that are relevant and will update their skills. For example, studying the New York Times or a magazine like Sports Illustrated for graphic techniques.

5) Accompany students to regional, state, and national press meets and urge them to participate actively in the seminars, asking questions, and learning from the "experts."

6) Encourage students to compete in specific writing contests, sponsored by Quill and Scroll and the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, as only two examples, or in state and regional competition.

7) Provide opportunities for students to widen their horizons by serving as a public relations arm of the school, preparing school-related stories for the professional media.

8) Enhance students' business skills, while adding an extra dimension to their journalism training, through soliciting, then preparing advertising copy for the publication.

9) Provide opportunities for students to attend summer university workshops to broaden their experience and bring back specific techniques to improve their publication. (Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, offers a five-week intensive High School Newspaper Institute that I can recommend highly, although my students have also attended shorter but equally worthwhile sessions at Ball State, Ohio University, and Indiana University.)

The results of my study also seem to corroborate Thomas

E. Blick's findings in his master's thesis at Pennsylvania State University, "High School Newspapers: Factors Significant in Achieving High Ratings," based on a national survey of high school newspaper advisers in the Spring of 1980.[11]

Among the characteristics Blick's study shows as having some relationship to the newspaper's rating include both adviser's and student's workshop attendance, the adviser's background in college journalism courses and the demands which the school places on the adviser's time.

"Experience on the part of both adviser and student is considered significant," Blick notes. "Advisers of top-rated papers have a mean of 8.9 years advising newspapers, whereas the mean of advisers of lower-rated papers is 6.1."

Professor Paschal, in his last year's address to this group, suggested 12 specific ways that journalism teachers/advisers could up-date their skills.[12] As my own study shows, the top-quality advisers I queried are already utilizing many of his suggestions. Several of his ideas, however, could be implemented to provide even more assistance for the harried adviser and his/her staff.

Specifically, Professor Paschal suggests:

1) The need to work more closely among each other and with scholastic press and advisers groups toward strengthening certification

requirements to include such basics as electronic editing, photography, production, etc., stressing that such information must be taught in a practical manner, with less emphasis on theory.

2) Advisers can study the offerings of the ERIC Clearinghouse to improve their particular deficiencies. He also encourages a national adviser group to establish an Information Service Center to store all the printed material in the scholastic journalism field and make it available to the teacher/adviser and student editor (for a fee).

3) A conclave of school press personalities at a truly "super" conference, where each could learn from others' experiences.

4) A continuation of the experiment conducted on the campus of the University of Oklahoma last summer. Titled "The American Student Press Institute," the concept, he believes could be expanded beyond one school (or region) to become national in scope.

5) Advisers can take an occasional breather from the halls of academe to "recycle" their own methods: an internship in a scholastic journalism-related area, perhaps a daily newspaper or a yearbook company plant.

In regard to the continuing education of the journalism teacher/adviser and his students, and based on the results of my inquiries, I can only echo Professor Paschal when he says, "What we propose is not easy. It will take the same kind of dedication as the 30-year adviser had . . . We must strive for more professionalism and less ego-feeding. We must be willing to experiment with our potential. We must firmly believe that we are doing (and teaching others to do) is both necessary and rewarding."[13]

Notes

[1] James F. Paschal, "Continuing Education for the Journalism Teacher/Adviser," The School Press Review, 57: 8-11 (November 1980); from an address to AEJ Secondary Education Division members in Boston, 1980.

[2] Letter, Ben Van Zante to Dolores P. Sullivan, May 27, 1981.

[3] Letter, Robert Button to Dolores P. Sullivan, June 16, 1981.

[4] Letter, Dr. Regis Boyle to Dolores P. Sullivan, June 16, 1981.

[5] Letter, Freeman B. Hover to Dolores P. Sullivan, June 7, 1981.

[6] Letter, Marjorie Robinson to Dolores P. Sullivan, May 28, 1981.

[7] Letter, Marion Hutchison to Dolores P. Sullivan, May 29, 1981.

[8] John Bowen, personal interview, May 22, 1981.

[9] Thomas Eveslage, "A Research Agenda for Journalism in the Secondary Schools;" from an address to AEJ Secondary Education Division members in Boston, 1980.

[10] Paschal, "Continuing Education," p. 11.

[11] Philip Rodenberg, "Results of High School Newspaper Survey Studies in Thesis," The School Press Review, 57:25 (May, 1981); based on information from Thomas E. Blick's master thesis for Pennsylvania State University.

[12] Paschal, "Continuing Education," p. 11.

[13] Paschal, "Continuing Education," p. 11.